



Spenser and the ROCKS



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Introduction

The *I Wonder Why* books are science books created specifically for young learners who are in their first years of school. The content for each book was chosen to be appropriate for youngsters who are beginning to construct knowledge of the world around them. These youngsters ask questions. They want to know about things. They are more curious than they will be when they are a decade older. Research shows that science is students' favourite subject when they enter school for the first time.

Science is both *what* we know and *how* we come to know it. Scientists learn by observing, comparing and organising the objects and ideas they are investigating. Children learn the same way. These thinking processes are among several inquiry behaviours that enable us to find out about our world and how it works. Observing, comparing and organising are fundamental to the more advanced thinking processes of relating, experimenting and inferring.

The books in this set of the *I Wonder Why* series focus on Earth science content. The materials of our Earth are mostly in the forms of solids (rocks and minerals), liquids (water) and gases (air). Inquiries about these materials are initiated by curiosity. When we don't know something about an area of interest, we try to understand it by asking questions and doing investigations. These five Earth science books are written from the learner's point of view: *How Does the Wind Blow?*; *Clouds, Rain, Clouds Again*; *Spenser and the Rocks*; *Environments of Our Earth*; and *Up, Up in a Balloon*. Children inquire about pebbles and rocks, rain and wind, and jungles and deserts. Their curiosity leads them to ask questions about land forms, weather and climate.

Each book uses a different approach to take the reader through simple scientific information. One book is expository, providing factual information. Several are narratives that allow a story to unfold. Another provides a historical perspective that tells how we gradually learn science through experimentations over time. The combination of different artwork, literary perspectives and scientific knowledge brings the content to the reader through several instructional avenues.

In addition, the content in these books correlates to criteria seen in common standards. Often the content is woven into each book so that its presence is subtle but powerful. The science activities in the Parent/Teacher Handbook section in each book enable learners to carry out their own investigations that relate to the content of the book. The materials needed for these activities are easily obtained, and the activities have been tested with youngsters to be sure they are age appropriate.

After students have completed a science activity, rereading or referring back to the book and talking about connections with the activity can be a deepening experience that stabilises the learning as a long-term memory.



Spenser was a boy who, like most children, collected things. He had been collecting all kinds of things for a long time. But he was beginning to get tired of the same old things.



When the school year ended, there was not much to do.
He just kicked around trying to think of something to do.